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Turkey's Role in the New World Order

New Challenges

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Introduction

- Turkey faces new challenges as the result of the political, military and economic developments we have been witnessing over the past decade, not the least of which is finding Turkey's role in the new world order that is now taking shape. If we were to make a brief evaluation of the present environment it would be correct to characterize it as a period of transition and transformation that calls for reorientations and new architectures.
- The new world order will be erected on top of the existing arrangements, eliminating present uncertainties, and constituting the political, military and economic structures of the 21st century.
- Therefore, the West should be prepared to shoulder heavy responsibilities in creating a security structure that will ensure a peaceful and stable future, making the right decisions, and, in particular avoiding mistakes in the security aspect of our future.

General Assessment

Dramatic developments mark the present period. The most striking of them all is the end of the Cold War, a victory for the Western Alliance, gained without firing a shot. The values represented by the West prevailed over the philosophy, values, system and practices of communism, the Warsaw Pact and the USSR. Despite these optimistic developments, new challenges and threats are emerging in the form of ethnic nationalism, international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles, religious fundamentalism, domestic instability in neighboring regions, and illicit trafficking of arms and drugs. There is a need to address these new problem areas, while considering the developments that give us hope for the future.

The exceptional solidarity and cohesion of the allies, and NATO's decisive deterrent power played a crucial role in winning the Cold War. It should not be forgotten that Turkey, maintaining the second largest effective standing armed forces of the Alliance, played a major role within this decisive deterrent power. The NATO partners must continue to demonstrate the same solidarity and cooperative spirit they shared during the Cold War as they begin forging the new order for peace and security.

The New Security Architecture in Europe

In the post-Cold War era, Europe embarked on a fresh process of integration and expansion as well as the establishment of a new security architecture. Besides NATO, the bedrock of the western security institutions, the Western European Union and the European Union (EU) are also in the process of becoming a part of that security architecture. Even as the importance of collective defense and the trans-atlantic link are being emphasized within NATO, simultaneously contradictory arguments are also being advanced, which can only be described as "Europe is for the Europeans." Unfortunately, the new European strategic concept is based on a fairly narrow-minded framework. Europe, which seems to be content with the elimination of the threat of an all-out-war, has decided that the Alliance's primary strategic goal should be the enhancement of security in central Europe.

Such a "central Europe oriented" approach may yield short-term positive results; however, its mid-term result could invite the revival of the Cold War by creating new divisions and groupings in Europe, perhaps this time as a "Western Curtain" instead of an "Iron Curtain." The countries invited to the enlargement process of NATO and the EU confirm the fact that these concerns are justified. The mistake is in the shortsighted approach when determining the new security borders of Europe. The basic elements, such as the economic and social dimensions and the political stability within the security concept, are being ignored.

The special place and the importance of the United States in the new security architecture are worth mentioning. It should be sufficient to quote the words of Secretary Madeleine Albright, "Let us not deceive ourselves. The United States is a European power." In the changing post-Cold War environment, the United States may seem to be losing its influence and lessening its activities within the European club. Even if the public view "let the Europeans solve their own problems themselves" is gaining support among the Americans, the United States still remains as an indispensable strategic partner for Europe, and Europe remains a region where the vital interests of the United States lie. Therefore, the United States still has the need and the responsibility to participate actively in every arrangement in Europe.

Another aspect that should be taken into consideration regarding the United States, is its position as the sole superpower in a new security identity and architecture. There are serious concerns that Europe's new security architecture will be based on radically reduced forces because of a relaxed attitude that in the future there will be no threat similar to that in the past. It is crucial to question whether deterrence, NATO's greatest asset, together with its crucial transatlantic link, would be as effective in the future as it was during the Cold War period.

Another significant issue for concern in the post-Cold War period, and particularly in western Europe, is that these countries could not demonstrate prompt resolve for intervening in regional conflicts that did not directly affect their own security. They approached these conflicts disorganized, driven by conflicting interests, incompatible with the traditional solidarity and unity of the western alliance. A concrete yet painful example of this attitude was demonstrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And, despite the bitter experience of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the political determination and structural arrangements required to prevent or stop by force similar crises in the future are still lacking. There are serious doubts whether Europe will have the political determination and the necessary mechanisms to address its own problems at the same level as that of the Cold War period.

There remains a need to maintain the effective transatlantic link which has been the bedrock of NATO's collective defense strategy in the creation of new European security architecture. Should Europe face the new risks and challenges with its new security structure, it would have to address problems beyond its

central European dimension to cover all the regions that affect its own security. Otherwise, it would have to face the risk of creating a very unstable peripheral region joining the narrow area which it assumes to be secure. The cost of this for Europe would be too high and the historical opportunity that emerged after the Cold War for establishing security and stability in a wider area will be missed.

Regional Problems

We are all aware that the area comprising the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East—where Turkey is located at the epicenter—is significant to the maintenance of peace and stability for not only Europe but for the world as well. These three regions where the vital interests of Europe and the world merge are marked by tensions arising from unresolved conflicts and wars that are likely to spill over in other countries. It is likely that each of these three regions will continue to occupy the security agenda of the West for the near future.

Stability and peace in the Balkans and particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina is yet to be secured. At present, there are certain positive developments that encourage us to look at the future with hope.

Looking at the Caucasus, we see a slightly different picture. Although one may observe certain positive signs, the likelihood of securing peace and stability is not near yet. The existence of more than one million Azeri refugees alone demonstrates the gravity of the social and humanitarian aspect of the problem. Another important issue in the Caucasus is the effort by the Russian Federation to reintroduce its influence in the region's newly independent states in the context of its "near abroad" policy. In assessments related to the Caucasus, economic considerations, often referred to as "ecostrategy," should be seriously calculated since they have a direct impact on security.

Its vast natural resources render the Caucasus even more important. Taken together with those in the Middle East, oil reserves in the region are calculated to be 200 billion barrels and are worth \$4,000 billion. This represents 71 percent of the world's oil reserves. One-third of the world's total natural gas reserves are in the Caucasus-Caspian Basin alone. When rich natural resources such as water and gold are also taken into account in addition to oil and gas, the region becomes a focal point where the vital interests of the world, including those of the West, intersect. Considering that global energy requirements are expected to increase 35 to 50 percent by the year 2010, the probability is that this region will eventually become an oil and natural gas center.

Turning to the Middle East, one finds a region with a web of conflicts inherited from the past. Besides the traditional Arab-Israeli conflict, some new security issues expand the problems.

Considerations on Turkey

Located at the epicenter of regions fraught with crises, Turkey is a secular, democratic, liberal country sharing western moral values. With the traditions of its 1,000 years of statehood, its constitutional order and its strong armed forces, Turkey is a center of power that can affect delicate balances of power in the region. Turkey as a reliable ally has stood firmly against the Warsaw Pact, by keeping huge, effective and professional armed forces at a cost to its economic and social development.

The new risks and challenges that could affect the whole western world have transformed Turkey from a "flank" to a "front state." Turkey is one of the few western countries whose importance has increased in the post-Cold War period. Turkey today is exerting every effort to contribute to regional and global peace. In this context;

- Turkey invites high level officials from countries which are members of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program, as well as from Caucasian and Central Asian states, with a view to providing them support to join NATO and integrate with the West.
- Students from these countries are trained in our military colleges in order to adapt them to western systems and practices. Approximately 2,300 students have graduated from Turkey's military colleges and another 1,700 students continue their training.
- Turkey actively participates in PFP exercises, providing support and even leading in many of the initiatives directed at regional security. Turkey continues its efforts to maintain a peacekeeping unit in the Balkans and to open a PFP training center in Turkey.
- Attaching great importance to cooperation directed at further strengthening the peace and stability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Turkey spares no effort to expand relations in the region. Relations with Israel have shown significant progress. Turkey's cooperation with Israel is in no way against any country, but is aimed at furthering relations with the countries of the region. However, Turkey and Israel—the only two democratic countries in the region—face the same threats of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
- The Turkish armed forces are participating in peacekeeping operations in the neighboring friendly countries, despite financial difficulties. Turkey's participation in the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), Deny Flight, Sharp Guard, IFOR and SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the multinational force in Albania, and contributions to the UN observers in Georgia, Kuwait and Al-Khalil are concrete examples of this effort.

However, these efforts are not reciprocated by the full support of Turkey's neighbors. Some neighboring states still lay claim to Turkish territory. Some states are trying to export their regime contrary to Turkey's constitutional order and the moral values of the modern world. Some of these countries support terrorism, a problem that will probably occupy the world community in the future.

Turkey has been combating terrorism for many years, and therefore is in a better position to appreciate the magnitude of this menace for the whole world. The PKK terrorist organization wants to create a so-called independent Kurdish state in an area comprising northern Iraq and some provinces of Turkey. The PKK is trying to hide its aim behind the pretext of "protecting the rights of the Kurdish people." The PKK has settled mainly in northern Iraq. The authority vacuum created following the Gulf War has enabled this terrorist organization to take root in the region. The PKK's terrorists penetrate Turkey from northern Iraq to stage subversive activities. The purpose of Turkish cross-border military operations is to eradicate the terrorists from the region and to prevent their future deployment. These operations are vital to Turkey's security and are not aimed at a permanent presence in northern Iraq.

Turkey, by concluding the Ankara Treaty of 1963, committed itself long ago to joining the western community and the West has likewise engaged itself in this process. However, today the West seems to forget that, during the Cold War, Turkey completely fulfilled its obligations in deterring and containing the Warsaw Pact threat, despite difficult economic conditions. The same West which once described Turkey as a "staunch ally" and a "bastion" is now following a policy of excluding Turkey from the new map of Europe. On the other hand, certain western circles are challenging Turkey's relations with the United States and Israel as detrimental to the interests of Europe.

Today Europe is, on the one hand, keeping Turkey outside the EU, while on the other, adopting an attitude that almost ignores and even complicates Turkey's legitimate security requirements. A few examples follow:

- Within the context of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations, a green light is practically given to prior adversaries to deploy more forces in the Caucasus in exchange for certain concessions in central Europe. By doing so, the risks for Turkey are compounded and the newly independent states are left under political and military pressure.
- Turkey is confronted with the precondition to EU membership of solving its problems with Greece, as if these problems did not exist when Greece was admitted to the Union. Furthermore, Turkey is asked to agree to unfavorable conditions in order to avoid Greece vetoing the EU enlargement in the central region.
- Cyprus is invited to join the EU, in total disregard of the 1960 founding agreements which clearly stipulate that the Republic of Cyprus cannot become a member of an international organization without the consent of the guarantor powers. There are also efforts to impose on Turkey unrealistic formulations such as addressing the security issues before reaching a political settlement in Cyprus.

The problems encountered in the areas of democracy, human rights and the preservation of basic rights and freedoms in Turkey are no more or less than those in the countries that are supposedly the defenders of these fundamental principles. The Turkish state is determined to deal with these problems in the context of its constitutional legal framework.

Turkish-U.S. relations date back almost one and a half centuries. During this period there have been ups and downs in this relationship due to certain developments in the international environment. However, all these did not prevent the flourishing of excellent relations between the two countries. For Turkish soldiers, members of the U.S. Armed Forces are "comrades-in-arms" with whom we have shared a common destiny in the Korean War, in NATO, in northern Iraq, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Somalia.

In the Final Analysis

It is likely that the institutions which emerged in Europe and in the region following the Cold War will not adequately meet the long-term security and stability requirements of the Alliance. The Central Europe-oriented approach contains a series of mistakes involving arrangements that will jeopardize the security and stability of Europe. By ignoring the important role a secular, democratic and modern Turkey can play in contributing to security and stability in a wider context, the West is denying Turkey an opportunity to fully integrate with Europe.

Undoubtedly, in the face of all these developments, Turkey will continue to expend every effort to optimize its own national interests and security requirements with or without the support of Europe. Turkey hopes to see its European friends come to the realization that excluding Turkey from Europe will have extremely high costs which might be vital for all members of the Alliance in the future.

This paper is a shortened version of General Çevik Bir's presentation to members of the National Defense University on Nov, 24, 1997.

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